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**JASON L. WARD**  
County Administrator

**OFFICE OF THE DORCHESTER COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**  
201 JOHNSTON STREET  
ST. GEORGE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29477

December 16, 2008

The Honorable Henry E. Brown, Jr.  
United States House of Representatives  
103 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-4001

ATTN: Ryan Bowley

Dear Congressman Brown:

As you know, rural Upper Dorchester County – home to St. George, Harleyville, Ridgeville and Dorchester – suffers much higher unemployment than the rest of the state. For Upper Dorchester County residents to increase their income, they must be prepared for jobs that demand higher levels of education. Our typical low-wage jobs, combined with overall low education levels, will continue the cycle of poverty for the residents along this Corridor of Shame in South Carolina.

The 2000 Census reported the following for the residents of St. George.

- Total population of 2,092: 51.2% white, 47.2% black, and 0.9 % Hispanic
- Of 760 (out of 804) households evaluated for income level, 50.8% had annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (17% of all households had \$10,000 or less of income annually).
- 34.4% of blacks and 5.9% whites were living below the poverty level.
- Unemployment rates were 2.9% for whites and a staggering 22% for blacks, for an overall unemployment rate of 9.5%.
- Only 37.9% of whites and 26.4% of blacks had earned high school diplomas.
- 8.9% of the total population was college-educated; 3.2% held graduate or professional degrees.

It is our hope that Dorchester County, working with our partners along the I-95 Corridor, can address critical needs, such as Transportation, Water and Wastewater, Education and Training and Quality of Life issues. In these areas alone, we have made significant strides in planning; yet funding for these projects will need deliberate commitments by the federal, state, local and private sectors to leverage resources and turn these plans into reality.

In our efforts to create a comprehensive plan to address these critical issues, we have revised our 2004 Comprehensive Plan and are working to create a vision for the County and set long-range policies to bring this vision to reality. The County is projected to grow by more than 40,000 people in the next 23 years. Yet the needs of the current residents remain unmet.

**Emergency Management Headquarters, Emergency Operations Center and Main Elections & Registration Office**

Growing from a population of 96,400 in 2000 to 123,500 in 2007, Dorchester County has out grown its existing law enforcement complex which houses its Emergency 9-1-1 dispatch center, Emergency Operations Center, and Emergency Management Department. The new center would provide 30,658 square feet of office and storage space for the Emergency Management Department and Communications Division, the Emergency Operations Center, the Dispatch Center, the Information Technology Services Department, and Elections and Voter Registration Center with storage for the voting machines and other equipment. This facility will replace the inadequate facility that the county currently utilizes and will provide much needed security to the county's telecommunication and data infrastructure, which is the backbone for all county operations.

This robust building will serve as the center of emergency and emergent communications for Dorchester County. It will house the county's Emergency 9-1-1 public safety answer point and computer aided dispatch center as well as the county's computer servers for data and telecommunications. It will house the Emergency Operations Center that will double as a training center in peace times. It will have shower and bunk facilities as well as a large kitchen and large break room that will allow the county's Emergency Operations Center personnel to shelter in place in the event of a hurricane, earthquake, flood, or some other natural disaster.

It will provide secure storage for the county's voting machines which must be remain plugged in at all times.

This is a \$6.5M construction project without 911 equipment and building FF&E or design fees. Total project budget of \$7.5 Million to \$8 Million.

We will provide you with more information regarding these initiatives and will continue to update you on the progress of these plans. Your support for these projects in FY'10 appropriations legislation and upcoming authorizing legislation will help us lift those less fortunate out of poverty and give them the chance to change their lives and the lives of their children forever.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. Many thanks for all you are doing to make a positive difference in South Carolina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason L. Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Jason L. Ward, County Administrator  
Dorchester County